



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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JERRY E. POWERS
Chief Probation Officer

“Nine Year Search for a Family; 15 Year Old Gets Holiday Wish in Court on Thursday”

Date: Thursday December 12, 2013

Time: Media Should Arrive No Later Than 10:15 am to set up in court

Location: Pasadena Juvenile Court
300 East Walnut Street
Pasadena, CA 91101
Courtroom Department A-2 (4th Floor)

Contact: Lisa Cambell-Motton [323-240-2435](tel:323-240-2435) mobile

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With the stroke of a judge’s gavel in a Pasadena Courtroom on Thursday December 12, 2013, 15 year old Stephen will finally know where he belongs; in a warm and loving home with his adoptive mother. It is a story many take for granted, but Stephen’s heartbreak tale is all too true for thousands of probation youth who don’t ‘fit’ the most desirable adoption profile. They are often children with unfit parents or absent parents but they are also children who were once charged with committing crimes.

“Far too many times, our society has labeled probation youth as being ‘criminals’ and ‘lost causes’ due to their past arrests,” Probation Supervisor Kendra Hamilton says, “Society, usually views these youth as predators rather than victims. Our probation youth are deserving of the same love that non-probation youth receive.”

Los Angeles County Probation officers worked tirelessly for more than four years with Stephen since he first entered the criminal justice system on burglary charges when he was 9 years old. Stephen spent his middle childhood in and out of temporary homes. He came close four different times to getting a permanent home. The time was right when Cheri Watkins stepped up.

As the judge will surely note during the emotional proceedings Thursday morning, this adoption hearing means more than a home. It is Stephen knowing with whom he will share the signature events in his life: Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving and school graduations.

“Adoption has traditionally been seen as something that cute little babies and children who have never done anything wrong deserve, which is why we at Probation are completing only 7th Probation related adoption in the entire nation,” says Lisa Campbell-Motton, Los Angeles County Probation Director, “Once a youth crosses over to delinquency, many see them as a lost cause and too dangerous and impulsive to ever be wanted by anyone. We are dispelling myths about these youth, not only in communities locally, but statewide and all over the nation even among our child welfare partners within and outside of Probation.”

Media Availability at Court:

Stephen, 15-year old youth
Cheri Watkins, Adoptive Parent
Kendra Hamilton, Probation Supervisor
Lisa Campbell-Motton, Probation Director